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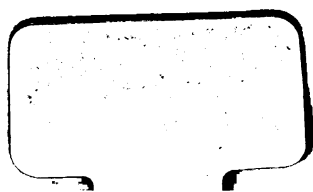
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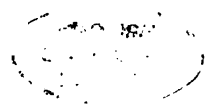
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XL 27.33/H



THE
HISTORY
OF
KING LEAR.

As it is performed at
THE THEATRE ROYAL
IN
COVENT GARDEN.



LONDON,
Printed for R. BALDWIN, in Pater-noster-Row; and
T. BECKET, and Co. in the Strand.
MDCCLXVIII,



ADVERTISEMENT.

“ **T**HE Tragedy of Lear is deservedly
 “ celebrated among the dramas of
 “ Shakespeare. There is, perhaps, no play
 “ which keeps the attention so strongly
 “ fixed; which so much agitates our passi-
 “ ons, and interests our curiosity. The art-
 “ ful involutions of distinct interests, the
 “ striking opposition of contrary characters,
 “ the sudden changes of fortune, and the
 “ quick succession of events, fill the mind
 “ with a perpetual tumult of indignation,
 “ pity, and hope. There is no scene which
 “ does not contribute to the aggravation of
 “ the distress, or conduct of the action;
 “ and scarce a line which does not conduce
 “ to the progress of the scene. So power-
 “ ful is the current of the poet’s imagina-
 “ tion, that the mind, which once ventures
 “ within it, is hurried irresistibly along.”

Such is the decision of Dr. Johnson on the
 Lear of Shakespeare. Yet Tate, with all
 this treasure before him, considered it as
 “ a heap of jewels unstrung, and unpö-
 “ lished;” and resolved, “ out of zeal for
 “ all the remains of Shakespeare,” to *new-*
model the story. Having formed this resolu-
 tion, “ it was my good fortune (says he) to
 “ light on one expedient to rectify what
 “ was wanting in the regularity and proba-
 “ bility of the tale; which was to run
 “ through the whole, *a love* betwixt Edgar

“ and Cordelia, that never changed word
 “ with each other in the original. This
 “ renders Cordelia’s indifference, and her
 “ father’s passion, in the first scene, proba-
 “ ble. It likewise gives countenance to
 “ Edgar’s disguise, making that a generous
 “ design, that was before a poor shift to
 “ save his life. The distress of the story is
 “ evidently heightened by it ; and it parti-
 “ cularly gave occasion to a new scene or
 “ two, of more success perhaps than merit.”

Now this very expedient of *a love* betwixt
 Edgar and Cordelia, on which Tate felici-
 tates himself, seemed to me to be one of the
 capital objections to his alteration : for even
 supposing that it rendered Cordelia’s indiffe-
 rence to her father more probable (an in-
 difference which Shakespeare has no where
 implied), it assigns a very poor motive for it ;
 so that what Edgar gains on the side of ro-
 mantick generosity, Cordelia loses on that of
 real virtue. The distress of the story is so
 far from being heightened by it, that it has
 diffused a languor and insipidity over all the
 scenes of the play from which Lear is ab-
 sent ; for which I appeal to the sensations of
 the numerous audiences, with which the
 play has been honoured ; and had the
 scenes been affectingly written, they would
 at least have divided our feelings, which
 Shakespeare has attached almost entirely to
 Lear and Cordelia, in their parental and
 filial capacities ; thereby producing passages
 infinitely more tragick than the embraces of
 Cordelia

Cordelia and the ragged Edgar, which would have appeared too ridiculous for representation, had they not been mixed and incorporated with some of the finest scenes of Shakespeare.

Tate, in whose days *love* was the soul of Tragedy as well as Comedy, was, however, so devoted to intrigue, that he has not only given Edmund a passion for Cordelia, but has injudiciously amplified on his criminal commerce with Gonerill and Regan, which is the most disgusting part of the original. The Rev. Dr. Warton has doubted, "whether the cruelty of the daughters is "not painted with circumstances too savage and unnatural *," even by Shakespeare. Still, however, in Shakespeare, some motives for their conduct are assigned; but as Tate has conducted that part of the fable, they are equally cruel and unnatural, without the poet's assigning any motive at all.

In all these circumstances, it is generally agreed, that Tate's alteration is for the worse; and his King Lear would probably have quitted the stage long ago, had not the poet made "the tale conclude in a success to the innocent distressed persons." Even in the catastrophe he has incurred the censure of Addison: but "in the present

* *Adventurer*, No. 122.

"case,

“ case, says Dr. Johnson, the publick has
 “ decided, and Cordelia, from the time of
 “ Tate, has always retired with victory and
 “ felicity.”

To reconcile the catastrophe of Tate to the story of Shakespeare, was the first grand object which I proposed to myself in this alteration; thinking it one of the principal duties of my situation, to render every drama submitted to the Publick, as consistent and rational an entertainment as possible. In this kind of employment, one person cannot do a great deal; yet if every Director of the Theatre will endeavour to do a little, the Stage will every day be improved, and become more worthy attention and encouragement. Romeo, Cymbeline, Every Man in his Humour, have long been refined from the dross that hindered them from being current with the Publick; and I have now endeavoured to purge the tragedy of Lear of the alloy of Tate, which has so long been suffered to debase it.

“ The utter improbability of Gloucester’s
 “ imagining, though blind, that he had
 “ leaped down Dover Cliff,” has been justly censured by Dr. Warton *; and in the representation it is still more liable to objection than in print. I have therefore, without scruple, omitted it, preserving, however, at the same time, that celebrated

description of the Cliff in the mouth of Edgar. The putting out Gloucester's eyes is also so unpleasing a circumstance, that I would have altered it, if possible; but, upon examination, it appeared to be so closely interwoven with the fable, that I durst not venture to change it. I had once some idea of retaining the character of *the fool*; but though Dr. Warton has very truly observed †, that the poet “ has so well conducted even “ the natural jargon of the beggar, and the “ jestings of the fool, which in other hands “ must have sunk into burlesque, that they “ contribute to heighten the pathetick ;” yet, after the most serious consideration, I was convinced that such a scene “ would “ sink into burlesque” in the representation, and would not be endured on the modern stage.

GEORGE COLMAN.

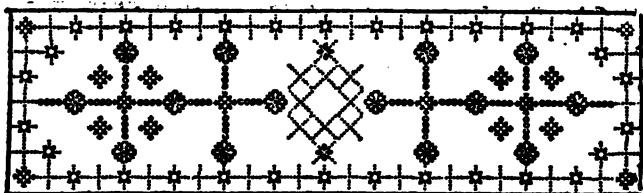
† Adventurer, No. 116.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LEAR, King of Britain,	Mr. Powell.
King of France,	Mr. Davis.
Duke of Burgundy,	Mr. Lewis.
Duke of Cornwall,	Mr. Gardner.
Duke of Albany,	Mr. Hull.
Earl of Gloucester,	Mr. Gibson.
Earl of Kent,	Mr. Clarke.
Edgar, son to Gloucester,	Mr. Smith.
Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester,	Mr. Bensley.
Doctor,	Mr. Redman.
Steward to Gonerill,	Mr. Cushing.
Captain,	Mr. Wignell.
Old Man, tenant to Gloucester,	Mr. Hallam.
Herald,	Mr. Holtom.
Servant to Cornwall,	Mr. T. Smith.
Gonerill,	Mrs. Stephens.
Regan,	Mrs. Du-Bellamy.
Cordelia,	Mrs. Yates.

Knights attending on the King, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers,
and Attendants.

SCENE, BRITAIN.



K I N G L E A R.

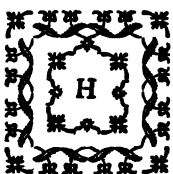


A C T I.

S C E N E, *The King's Palace.*

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund the Bastard.

Kent.



Thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glo. It did always seem so to us : but now in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most.

Kent. Is not this your son, my lord ?

Glo. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge.

Kent. I cannot conceive you.

Glo. Sir, this young fellow's mother had, indeed, a son for her cradle, ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault ?

Kent. I cannot with the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

Glo. But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Do you know this nobleman, Edmund?

Edm. No, my lord.

Glo. My lord of Kent; —

Remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

Edm. My services to your lordship.

Kent. I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edm. Sir, I shall study your deserving.

Trumpets sound, within.

Glo. The King is coming.

Scene opens, and discovers King Lear; Cornwall, Albany, Gonerill, Regan, Cordelia, and attendants.

Lear. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Glo'ster.

Glo. I shall, my liege. [Exit.

Lear. Mean time we shall express our darker purpose:

Give me the map here. Know, we have divided,
In three, our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent,
To shake all cares and business from our age;
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburthen'd crawl tow'rd death. Our son of Corn-
wall,

And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters sev'ral dow'rs, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes France and
Burgundy,

Great rivals in our younger daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their am'rous sojourn,
And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, daughters,
Which of you, shall we say, doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend,
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Gonerill,
Our eldest born, speak first.

Gon. I love you, sir,
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond

K I N G L E A R.

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Beyond what can be valu'd, rich or rare ;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour,
As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found.
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable,
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

Cor. What shall Cordelia do? love, and be silent.

[*Aside.*]

Lear. Of all these bounds, ev'n from this line to this,

With shadowy forests and with champions rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue
Be this perpetual. — What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall? speak.

Reg. I'm made of that self mould, as is my sister,
And prize me at her worth, in my true heart.
I find, she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short: that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
Than your dear Highness' love.

Cor. Then poor Cordelia!

[*Aside.*]

And yet not so, since, I am sure my love's
More pond'rous than my tongue.

Lear. To thee, and thine, hereditary ever,
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,
Than that conferr'd on Gonerill. — Now our joy,
Although our last, not least; to whose young love,
The vines of France, and milk of Burgundy,
Strive to be int'ress'd: what say you, to draw
A third, more opulent than your sisters? speak.

Cor. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing?

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing can come of nothing; speak again.

Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your Majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.

4 KING LEAR.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia? mend your speech
a little,

Left you may mar your fortunes.

Cor. Good my lord,
You gave me being, bred me, lov'd me. I
Return those duties back, as are right fit;
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say,
They love you, all? hap'ly, when I shall wed,
That lord, whose hand must take my plight, shall
carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

Lear. But goes thy heart with this?

Cor. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. So young, and so untender?

Cor. So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower.

For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night,
By all the operations of the orbs,
From whom we do exist, and cease to be:
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever.

Kent. Good my Liege——

Lear. Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I lov'd her most, and thought to set my Rest
On her kind nurs'ry. Hence, avoid my sight! —
[To *Cor.*

So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her; call France; who stirs?
Call Burgundy. — Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters dowers, digest the third.
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
I do invest you jointly with my power,

Preheminence,

Preheminence, and all the large effects
 That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly course,
 With reservation of an hundred knights,
 By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
 Make with you by due turns: only retain
 The name and all th' addition to a king:
 The sway, revenue, execution,
 Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,
 This coronet part between you. [*Giving the crown.*]

Kent. Royal Lear,
 Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,
 Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,
 And as my patron thought on in my pray'rs —

Lear. The bow is bent and drawn, make from
 the shaft.

Kent. Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
 The region of my heart; be Kent unmannerly,
 When Lear is mad: with better judgment check
 This hideous rashness; with my life I answer,
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least.

Lear. Kent, on thy life no more!

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn
 To wage against thy foes; nor fear to lose it,
 Thy safety being the motive.

Lear. Out of my sight!

Kent. See better, Lear.

Lear. Now by Apollo —

Kent. Now by Apollo, king,
 Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear. O vassal! miscreant! —

[*Laying his hand on his sword.*]

Alb. Corn. Dear sir, forbear.

Kent. Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow
 Upon thy rank disease; revoke thy doom,
 Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
 I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear. Hear me, recreant!
 Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,
 To come betwixt our sentence and our power;

(Which nor our nature, nor our place, can bear;) Take thy reward.

Five days we do allot thee for provision,
To shield thee from disasters of the world;
And, on the sixth, to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom; if, the tenth day following,
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death: away! By Jupiter,
This shall not be revok'd.

Kent. Why fare thee well, King, since thou art resolv'd.

The Gods protect thee, excellent Cordelia,
That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said!
Now to new climates my old truth I bear;
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here. [*Exit,*

Enter Gloucester, with France and Burgundy, and Attendants.

Glo. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord,

Lear. Right noble Burgundy,
Who with this king hast rivall'd for our daughter;
When she was dear to us, we held her so;
But now her price is fall'n: Sir, there she stands,
Will you with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
Dowr'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,
Take her, or leave her?

Bur. Pardon, royal Sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, Sir, for by the pow'r that made me,

I tell you all her wealth. — For you, great king,
[*To France,*

I would not from your love make such a stray,
To match you where I hate.

France. This is most strange.

Cor. I yet beseech your Majesty,
(If, for I want that glib and oily art,
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,

KING LEAR.

7

I'll do't before I speak,) that you make known.
It is no vicious blot, scandal, or foulness,
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favour:
But ev'n for want of that, for which I'm richer,
A still solliciting eye, and such a tongue,
That I am glad I've not; though, not to have it,
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear. Better thou
Hadst not been born, than not have pleas'd me better.

France. Is it but this? a tardiness in nature,
Which often leaves the history unspoke,
That it intends to do? Fairest Cordelia,
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon;
Be't lawful, I take up what's cast away.
Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.

Lear. Thou hast her, France; let her be thine,
for we
Have no such daughter; nor shall ever see
That face of hers again; away!
Come, noble Burgundy.

[*Flourish.* *Exeunt Lear and Burgundy.*

France. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cor. Ye jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
Cordelia leaves you: I know what you are,
And, like a sister, am most loth to call
Your faults, as they are nam'd. Love well our
father.

To your professing bosoms I commit him;
So farewell to you both.

Reg. Prescribe not us our duty.

Gon. Let your study
Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you
At fortune's alms.

Cor. Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides.
Well may you prosper!

France. Come, my fair Cordelia.

[*Exit Fra. and Cor.*

B 4

Gon.

Gon. Sister, it is not little I've to say,
Of what most nearly appertains to us both;
I think, our father will go hence to night.

Reg. That's certain, and with you; next month
with us,

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is: the
observation I have made of it hath not been little;
he always loved our sister most, and with what poor
judgement he hath now cast her off, appears too
grossly.

Reg. 'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath
ever but slenderly known himself.

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been
but rash; then must we look, from his age, to re-
ceive not alone the imperfections of long-ingrafted
condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness,
that infirm and cholerick years bring with them.

Reg. Such inconstant starts are we like to have
from him, as this of Kent's banishment.

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking
between France and him; pray you, let us hit to-
gether: if our father carry authority with such dis-
position as he bears, this last surrender of his will
but offend us.

Reg. We shall further think of it.

Gon. We must do something; ay, and suddenly.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE *changes to a Castle belonging to the Earl
of Gloucester.*

Enter Edmund, with a Letter.

Edm. Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound; wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The courtesy of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines
Lag of a brother? Why *bastard*? wherefore *base*?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as gen'rous, and my shape as true,

As

As honest madam's issue? why brand they us
 With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund,
 As to th' legitimate Edgar; fine word—*legitimate*—
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
 Shall be th' legitimate—I grow, I prosper;
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

To him enter Gloucester.

Glo. Edmund, how now? What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord. [*Putting up the letter.*]

Glo. No! what needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? let me see.

Edm. I beseech you, sir, pardon me; it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I have perus'd, I find it not fit for your o'er-looking.

Glo. Give me the letter, sir.

Edm. I shall offend, either to detain, or give it: the contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Glo. Let's see, let's see.

Edm. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay; or taste, of my virtue.

Glo. [*reads.*]

“ This policy and reverence of ages makes the
 “ world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our
 “ fortunes from us, till our oldness cannot relish
 “ them. I begin to find the oppression of aged
 “ tyranny; which sways, not as it hath power,
 “ but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this
 “ I may speak more. If our father would sleep
 “ till I wak'd him, you should enjoy half his
 “ revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your
 “ brother,

EDGAR.”

Sleep till I wake him—you should enjoy half his revenue—My son Edgar! had he a hand to write this!

this!—a heart and brain to breed it in! When came this to you; who brought it?

Edm. It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

Glo. You know the character to be your brother's?

Edm. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

Glo. It is his.

Edm. It is his hand, my lord; I hope, his heart is not in the contents.

Glo. Has he never before sounded you in this business?

Edm. Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as a ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

Glo. O villain, villain! his very opinion in the letter. Abhorred villain! Go, seek him; I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain! where is he?

Edm. I do not well know, my lord. I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

Glo. Think you so?

Edm. If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction: and that, without any further delay than this very evening.

Glo. He cannot be such a monster.

Edm. Nor is not, sure.

Glo. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him—heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you; frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution.

Edm.

Edm. I will seek him, sir, presently; convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

Glo. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us; tho' the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourg'd by the frequent effects; Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father. We have seen the best of our time. Find out this villain, Edmund; and it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully—and the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, Honesty. 'Tis strange. *[Exit.]*

Manet Edmund.

Edm. This is the excellent soppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, (often the surfeits of our own behaviour) we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon and stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treacherous, by spherical predominance; drunkards, lyars and adulterers, by an forc'd obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! I should have been what I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my Bastardizing.

To him, Enter Edgar.

Pat!—he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy; my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam—O, these eclipses portend these divisions!

Edg. How now, brother Edmund, what serious contemplation are you in?

Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

Edg.

Edg. Do you busy yourself with that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily. When saw you my father last?

Edg. The night gone by.

Edm. Spake you with him?

Edg. Ay, two hours together.

Edm. Parted you in good terms? found you no displeasure in him, by word or countenance?

Edg. None at all.

Edm. Bethink yourself, wherein you have offended him: and, at my intreaty, forbear his presence, until some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure; which at this instant so rageth in him, that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

Edg. Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edm. That's my fear; I pray you, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: pray you, go; if you do stir abroad, go armed.

Edg. Armed, brother!

Edm. Brother, I advise you to the best; I am no honest man, if there be any good meaning towards you; I have told you what I have seen and heard, but faintly; nothing like the image and horror of it; pray you, away!

Edg. Shall I hear from you anon?

Edm. I do serve you in this business: [*Exit Edg.*
A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms,
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy: I see the business.
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit;
All with me's meet, that I can fashion fit. [*Exit.*

SCENE,

SCENE, *the Duke of Albany's Palace.*

Enter Gonerill, and Steward.

Gon. My father strike my gentleman?

Stew. Ay, madam.

Gon. By day and night, he wrongs me; I'll not endure it:

His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On ev'ry trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speak with him; say, I am sick.
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

Stew. I understand, and will obey you, madam.

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows: I'd have it come to question.
If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be over-rul'd: idle old Man,
That still would manage those authorities,
That he hath given away. —
Remember what I've said.

Stew. Very well, madam.

Gon. And let his knights have colder looks
among you: what grows of it, no matter; advise
your fellows so: I'll write strait to my sister to
hold my course: away! *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE *changes to an open Place before the Palace.*

Enter Kent disguis'd.

Kent. If but as well I other accents borrow,
And can my speech diffuse, my good intent
May carry thro' itself to that full issue,
For which I raz'd my likeness. Now banish'd
Kent,

If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st,
Shall find thee full of labours.

Enter

Enter Lear, Knights and Attendants.

Lear. Let me not stay a jot for dinner, go, get it ready: how now, what art thou? [*To Kent.*

Kent. A man, sir.

Lear. What dost thou profess? what would'st thou with us?

Kent. I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly, that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little; to fight when I cannot chuse, and to eat no fish.

Lear. What art thou?

Kent. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

Lear. If thou bee'st as poor for a subject, as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What would'st thou?

Kent. Service.

Lear. Whom would'st thou serve?

Kent. You.

Lear. Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent. No, sir; but you have that in your countenance, which I would fain call master.

Lear. What's that?

Kent. Authority.

Lear. What services canst thou do?

Kent. I can keep honest counsels, ride, run, marr a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in; and the best of me is diligence.

Lear. How old art thou?

Kent. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing; nor so old, to doat on her for any thing. I have years on my back forty-eight.

Lear. Follow me, thou shalt serve me.

Enter

Enter Steward.

You, you, firrah, where's my daughter?

Stew. So please you—

[Exit.]

Lear. What says the fellow there? call the clot-pole back.

Knight. He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

Lear. Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd him?

Knight. Sir, he answer'd me in the roundest manner, he would not.

Lear. He would not?

Knight. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but to my judgment, your highness is not entertain'd with that ceremonious affection as you were wont.

Lear. Ha! say'st thou so?

Knight. I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent, when I think your highness is wrong'd.

Lear. Thou but remember'st me of my own conception. I have perceiv'd a most faint neglect of late; I will look further into't. Go you and tell my daughter, I would speak with her.

Enter Steward.

O, you, sir, come you hither, sir; who am I, sir?

Stew. My lady's father.

Lear. My lady's father? my lord's knave!

Stew. I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

Lear. Do you bandy looks with me, rascal?

[Striking him.]

Stew. I'll not be struck, my lord?

Kent. Nor tript neither, you base foot-ball player.

[Tripping up his heels.]

Lear. I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee.

Kent. Come, sir, arise, away.

[Pushes the Steward out]

To them, Enter Gonerill.

Lear. How now, daughter, what makes that frontlet on? you are too much of late i'th'frown.

Gon. Your insolent retinue, sir,
Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth
In rank and not to be endured riots.
I thought by making this well known unto you,
T'have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,
That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance; if you should, the fault
Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep.

Lear. Are you our daughter?

Gon. I would, you would make use of your good wisdom,
Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away
These dispositions, which of late transport you
From what you rightly are.

Lear. Does any here know me? this is not Lear:
Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? where are his eyes?

Either his notion weakens, his discernings
Are lethargied—Ha! waking?—'tis not so;
Who is it that can tell me who I am?
Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Gon. This admiration, sir, is much o'th'favour
Of other your new humours. I beseech you,
To understand my purposes aright.
You, as you're old and reverend, should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
Men so disorder'd, so debauch'd and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shews like a riotous inn. Be then desir'd
By her, that she will take the thing she begs,
Of fifty to disquantity your train;
And the remainders,
To be such men as may besort your age,
And know themselves and you.

Lear. Darkness and devils!

Saddle my horses, call my train together.——

Degen'rate viper! I'll not trouble thee;

Yet have I left a daughter:

Gon. You strike my people, and your disorder'd
rabble

Make servants of their betters.

To them, Enter Albany.

Lear. Woe! that too late repents.—O, sir, are
you come?

Is it your will? speak, sir. Prepare my horses.—

[To Alb.]

Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou shew'st thee in a child,
Than the sea-monster.

Alb. Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear. Detested kite! thou liest. *[To Gonerill.]*

My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know.

O most small fault!

How ugly didst thou in Cordelia shew!

Which, like an engine, wrencht my frame of nature
From the fix'd place; drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!

Beat at this gate that let thy folly in,

[Striking his head.]

And thy dear judgment out.—Go, go, my people.

Alb. Now, gods, that we adore, whereof comes
this?

Gon. Never afflict yourself to know of it;
But let his disposition have that scope,
That dotage gives it.

Lear. What, fifty of my followers at a clap?

Alb. What's the matter, sir?

Lear. I tell thee—life and death! I am abus'd,
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;

[To Gon.]

That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
Should make thee worth them.—blasts and fogs
upon thee!

Th'untented woundings of a father's curse
 Pierce every sense about thee! old fond eyes,
 Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,
 And cast you, with the waters that you lose,
 To temper clay. No, Gorgon, thou shalt find,
 That I'll resume the shape, which thou dost think
 I have cast off for ever.

Alb. My lord, I'm guiltless, as I'm ignorant,
 Of what hath mov'd you.

Lear. It may be so, my lord——
 Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear a father!
 If thou didst intend
 To make this creature fruitful, change thy purpose;
 Into her womb convey sterility,
 Dry up in her the organs of increase,
 And from her derogate body never spring
 A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
 Create her child of spleen, that it may live,
 And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her;
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks:
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
 To laughter and contempt; that she may feel,
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
 To have a thankless child. — Go, go, my people.

[*Exeunt.*]

END of the FIRST ACT.



A C T II.

SCENE, *an Apartment in the Castle belonging to the Earl of Gloucester.*

Enter Edmund.

HE Duke be here to-night! the better! best!

This weaves itself perforce into my business,

Which I must act: briefness and fortune, work!

Brother, a word; descend; brother, I say; —

To him, Enter Edgar

My father watches; O, sir, fly this place,
Intelligence is giv'n where you are hid;
You've now the good advantage of the night —
Have you not spoken 'gainst the duke of Cornwall?
He's coming hither now i'th'night, i'th'haste,
And Regan with him; have you nothing said
Upon his party 'gainst the duke of Albany?
Advise yourself.

Edg. I'm sure on't not a word.

Edm. I hear my father coming. 'Tis not safe
To tarry here. Fly, brother! hence! away.

[Exit Edgar.]

Glo'ster approaches. — Now for a feigned scuffle!
—Yield! come before my father! lights, here, lights!
Some blood drawn on me, would beget opinion

[Wounds his arm.]

Of my more fierce encounter. I've seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport. Father! father!
Stop, stop, no help? —

To him, enter Gloucester and servants with torches.

Glo. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

Edm. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
Mumbling of wicked charms, conj'ring the moon
To stand's auspicious mistress.

Glo. But where is he?

Edm. Look, Sir, I bleed.

Glo. Where is the villain, Edmund?

Edm. Fled this way, sir, when by no means he
could —

Glo. Pursue him, ho! go after. By no means, what?

Edm. Persuade me to the murder of your lordship.

But that, I told him, the revenging gods
'Gainst Parricides did all their thunder bend,
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
The child was bound to th'father — Sir, in fine,
Seeing how lothly opposite I stood
To his unnat'ral purpose, in fell motion
With his prepared sword he charges home
My unprovided body, lanc'd my arm;
Till at length gaffed by the noise I made,
Full suddenly he fled.

Glo. Let him fly far;

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught.

The noble duke,

My worthy and arch patron, comes to-night;

By his authority I will proclaim it,

That he, which finds him, shall deserve our thanks;

He that conceals him, death.

Edm. When I dissuaded him from his intent,

And threaten'd to discover him; he replied,

Thou unpossessing Bastard! do'st thou think,

If I would stand against thee, the reposal

Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee

Would make thy words faith'd? no; I'd turn it all

To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice.

Glo. O strange, fasten'd, villain!

Would he deny his letter?

All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;
 I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
 May have due note of him; and of my land,
 (Loyal and natural boy!) I'll work the means
 To make thee capable. [Exeunt.]

SCENE, *the Outside of the Earl of Gloucester's Castle.*

Enter Kent, and Steward, severally.

Stew. Good evening to thee, friend; art of this house?

Kent. Ay.

Stew. Where may we set our horses?

Kent. I'll mire.

Stew. Pr'ythee, if thou lov'st me, tell me.

Kent. I love thee not.

Stew. Why then I care not for thee.

Kent. If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make thee care for me.

Stew. Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

Kent. Fellow, I know thee.

Stew. What dost thou know me for?

Kent. A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats, a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lilly-liver'd, action-taking, knave; a whorson, glass-gazing, superserviceable finical tongue; one that would'st be a bawd in way of good service; and art nothing but the composition of knave, beggar, coward, pander; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deny'st the least syllable of thy addition.

Stew. Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one, that is neither known of thee nor knows thee?

Kent. What a brazen-fac'd varlet art thou, thus to deny thou know'st me? it is two days ago, since I tript up thy heels, and beat thee before the king? draw, you rogue; for tho' it be night, yet the moon

shines; I'll make a sop o'th' moonshine of you;
you whorson, cullionly, barber-monger, draw.

[*Drawing his sword.*]

Stew. Away, I have nothing to do with thee.

Kent. Draw, you rascal; you come with letters
against the king; and take vanity, the puppet's part,
against the royalty of her father; draw, you rogue,
or I'll so carbonado your thanks—draw, you rascal,
come your ways.

Stew. Help, ho! murther! help! —

Kent. Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand, you
neat slave, strike. [*Beating him.*]

Stew. Help ho! murther! murther! — [*Exeunt.*]

Flourish. Enter Cornwall and Regan, attended;
meeting Gloucester and Edmund.

Glo. Your graces are right welcome.

Corn. How now, my noble friend? since I came
hither,

Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

Reg. If it be true, all vengeance comes too short,
Which can pursue th'offender: how does my lord?

Glo. O madam, my old heart is crack'd, 'tis crack'd.

Reg. What, did my father's godson seek your life?
He whom my father nam'd, your Edgar?

Glo. O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid.

Reg. Was he not companion with the riotous
knights,

That tend upon my father?

Glo. I know not, madam: 'tis too bad, too bad.

Edm. Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

Reg. No marvel then, tho' he were ill affected;
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,
To have th'expence and waste of his revenues.

I have this present evening from my sister
Been well inform'd of them; and with such cautions,
That if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.

Corn. Nor I, assure thee, Regan,

Edmund,

Edmund, I hear, that you have shewn your father
A child-like office:

Edm. 'Twas my duty, sir.

Glo. He did reveal his practice, and receiv'd
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

Corn. Is he pursu'd?

Glo. Ay, my good lord.

Corn. If he be taken, he shall never more
Be fear'd of doing harm. As for you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
So much commend itself, you shall be ours:
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need.

Edm. I shall serve you, sir, truly, however else.

Glo. I thank your grace.

Reg. Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences, which I best thought it fit
To answer from our home: the sev'ral messengers
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,
Lay comforts to your bosom; and bestow
Your needful counsel to our businesses,
Which crave the instant use.

Glo. I serve you, madam.

Enter Steward and Kent, with swords drawn.

Glo. Weapons? arms? what's the matter here?

Corn. Keep peace, upon your lives; he dies,
that strikes again; what's the matter?

Reg. The messengers from our sister and the King?

Corn. What is your difference? speak.

Stew. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

Kent. No marvel, you have so bestir'd your
valour; you cowardly rascal! nature disclaims all
share in thee: a tailor made thee.

Corn. Thou art a strange fellow; a tailor make a
man?

Kent. Ay, a tailor, sir; a stone-cutter, or a painter
could not have made him so ill, though they had
been but two hours o'th' trade.

Corn. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Stew. This ancient-ruffian, fir, whose life I have spar'd at suit of his grey beard——

Kent. Thou whorson zed! thou unnecessary letter! my lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and dash the wall of a jakes with him. Spare my grey beard? you wagtail!——

Corn. Peace, firrah! Know you no reverence?

Kent. Yes, fir, but anger hath a privilege.

Corn. Why art thou angry?

Kent. That such a slave as this shou'd wear a sword,

Who wears no honesty: such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords in twain

Too intricate to unloose: sooth every passion,
That in the nature of their lords rebels:

Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;

Forswear, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks

With ev'ry tale and vary of their masters;

As knowing nought, like dogs, but following,

A plague upon your epileptick visage!

Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?

Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,

I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

Corn. What art thou mad, old fellow?

Glo. How fell you out? say that.

Kent. No contraries hold more antipathy,
Than I and such a knave.

Corn. Why dost thou call him knave? what is his fault?

Kent. His countenance likes me not.

Corn. No more, perchance, does mine, nor his,
nor hers.

Kent. Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain;

I have seen better faces in my time,

Than stand on any shoulders that I see

Before me at this instant.

Corn. This is some fellow,

Who having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect

A sawcy

A sawcy roughness ; and constrains the garb,
 Quite from his nature. He can't flatter, he,
 An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth ;
 And they will take it, so, if not, he's plain.
 These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
 Harbour more craft, and more corrupt design,
 Than twenty silly ducking minions,
 That stretch their duties nicely.

Kent. Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,
 Under th' allowance of your grand aspect,
 Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire
 On flickering Phœbus' front—

Corn. What mean'st by this ?

Kent. To go out of my dialect, which you dis-
 commend so much : I know sir, I am no flatterer ;
 he, that beguil'd you in a plain accent, was a plain
 knave ; which for my part I will not be, though I
 should win your displeasure to intreat me to't.

Corn. What was th' offence you gave him ?

Stew. I never gave him any :
 It pleas'd the King his master very lately
 To strike at me upon his misconstruction ;
 When he conjunct, and flatt'ring his displeasure,
 Tript me behind ; being down, insulted, rail'd,
 And put upon him such a deal of man,
 That he got praises of the King,
 For him attempting who was self-subdu'd ;
 And in the fleshment of this dread exploit,
 Drew on me here again.

Kent. None of these rogues and cowards,
 But Ajax is their fool.

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks !
 You stubborn ancient knave, you rev'rend braggart,
 We'll teach you—

Kent. Sir, I am too old to learn :
 Call not your stocks for me ; I serve the King ;
 On whose employment I was sent to you.
 You shall do small respect, shew too bold malice
 Against the grace and person of my master,
 Stocking his messenger.

Corn.

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks;
As I have life and honour, there shall he sit 'till noon.

Reg. 'Till noon! 'till night, my lord, and all night too.

Kent. Why, madam, if I were your father's dog, You could not use me so.

Reg. Sir, being his knave, I will. [*Stocks brought out.*]

Corn. This is a fellow of the self same nature Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks,

Glo. Let me beseech your grace not to do so;
His fault is much, and the good King his master
Will check him for it; but must take it ill
To be thus slighted in his messenger.

Corn. I'll answer that.

Reg. My sister may receive it worse;
To have her gentleman abus'd, assaulted.

[*Kent is put in the stocks.*]

Come, my lord, away. [*Exeunt Reg. and Corn.*]

Glo. I'm sorry for thee, friend; 'tis the Duke's pleasure,

Whose disposition, all the world well knows,
Will not be check'd nor stop'd. I'll intreat for thee.

Kent. Pray, do not, sir, I've watch'd and travell'd hard;

Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle:
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels;
Give you good morrow.

Glo. The Duke's to blame in this, 'twill be ill taken. [*Exit.*]

Kent. Approach, thou beacon to this under-globe, [*Looking up to the moon.*]

That by thy comfortable beams I may
Peruse this letter. I know, 'tis from Cordelia;
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my obscure course. All weary and o'er-watch'd,
Take vantage heavy eyes, not to behold
This shameful lodging.

Fortune, good night; smile once more, turn thy wheel. [*Sleeps.*]

SCENE

SCENE *changes to a part of a Heath.*

Enter Edgar.

Edg. I've heard myself proclaim'd;
And, by the happy hollow of a tree,
Escap'd the hunt. No port is free, no place,
That guard and most unusual vigilance
Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself: and am bethought
To take the basest and the poorest shape,
That ever Penury in contempt of man
Brought near to beast: my face I will besmear,
Blanket my loins; else all my hair in knots;
And out-face
The winds, and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
Of bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
Strike in their numb'd and mortify'd bare arms
Pins, iron-spikes, thorns, sprigs of rosemary;
And thus from sheep-cotes, villages, and mills,
Inforce their charity; poor Turlygood! poor Tom!
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am. [*Exit.*]

SCENE *changes, again, to the Earl of Gloucester's Castle.*

Kent in the stocks. Enter Lear and Attendants.

Lear. 'Tis strange, that they should so depart
from home,
And not send back my messenger.

Kent. Hail to thee, noble master!

Lear. Ha! mak'st thou thy shame thy pastime?

Kent. No, my lord.

Lear. What's he, that hath so much thy place
mistook;
To set thee here?

Kent. It is both he and she,
Your son and daughter.

Lear. No.

Kent. Yes.

Lear

Lear. No, I say.

Kent. I say yea.

Lear. By Jupiter, I swear no.

Kent. By Juno, I swear, ay.

Lear. They durst not do't.

They could not, would not do't; 'tis worse than murder,

To do upon respect such violent outrage:

Resolve me with all modest haste, which way

Thou might'st deserve, or they impose, this usage,
Coming from us.

Kent. My lord, while at their home
I did commend your highness' letters to them,
Came a reeking post,
Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth
From Gonerill his mistress, salutation;
Deliver'd letters spight of intermission,
Which presently they read: on whose contents
They summon'd up their train, and strait took horse;
Commanding me to follow and attend
The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks;
And meeting here the other messenger,
Whose welcome, I perceiv'd, had poison'd mine;
(Being the very fellow, which of late
Display'd so sawcily against your highness,)
Having more man than wit about me, I drew;
He rais'd the house with loud and coward cries:
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth
The shame which here it suffers.

Lear. Oh, how this mother swells up tow'rd my heart!

Down, down, thou climbing sorrow!

Thy element's below; where is this daughter?

Kent. With the Earl, sir, here within.

Enter Gloucester.

Lear. Now Glo'ster!

Glo. [*Whispers Lear.*]

Lear. Ha! how's this?

Deny

Deny to speak with me? they're sick, they're weary,
They have travell'd all the night? mere fetches,
The images of revolt and flying off.
Bring me a better answer!

Glo. My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the duke ——

Lear. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion! —
Fiery? what quality? why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall, and his wife.

Glo. Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.

Lear. Inform'd them? dost thou understand
me, man?

Glo. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. The King would speak with Cornwall,
the dear father

Wou'd with his daughter speak; commands her
service:

Are they inform'd of this? — my breath and blood! —

Fiery? the fiery Duke? tell the hot Duke, that —

No, but not yet; may be, he is not well;

Infirmity doth still neglect all office,

Whereto our health is bound. I will forbear,

Nor task the indispos'd and sickly fit

As the sound man. — Death on my state! but
wherefore

Should he sit here? this act persuades me,

That this remotion of the Duke and her

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth;

Go, tell the Duke and's wife, I'd speak with them:

Now, presently, — bid them come forth and hear me,

Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum,

'Till it cry, sleep to death. — Oh! are you come?

Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Servants.

Corn. Hail to your grace! [*Kent is set at liberty.*]

Lear. Good morrow both!

Oh me, my heart! my rising heart! but down!

Reg. I am glad to see your highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are; I know what
reason I have

I have to think so ; if thou wert not glad,
 I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
 Sepulchring an adultress. Beloved Regan,
 Thy sister's naught : Oh Regan, she hath tied
 Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture here ;

[Points to his heart.]

I can scarce speak to thee ; thou'lt not believe,
 With how deprav'd a quality—oh Regan !

Reg. I pray you, sir, take patience ; I have hope,
 You less know how to value her desert,
 Than she to scant her duty.

Lear. Say ? how is that ?

Reg. I cannot think, my sister in the least
 Would fail her obligation. If, perchance,
 She have restrain'd the riots of your followers ;
 'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
 As clears her from all blame.

Lear. My curses on her !

Reg. O, sir, you are old ; you should be rul'd and led
 By some discretion ; therefore, I pray you,
 That to our sister you do make return ;
 Say, you have wrong'd her, sir.

Lear. Ask her forgiveness ?

Do you but mark, how this becometh us !
 Dear daughter, I confess that I am old ;
 Age is unnecessary : on my knees I beg,
 That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.

Reg. Good sir, no more ; these are unsightly
 humours.

Return you to my sister.

Lear. Never, Regan :

She hath abated me of half my train ;
 Look'd blank upon me ; struck me with her tongue
 Most serpent-like, upon the very heart.
 All the stor'd vengeance of heaven fall
 On her ingrateful top !

Reg. O the blest gods !

So will you with on me, when the rash mood is on.

Lear. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my
 curse :
 Thy

Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness. 'Tis not in thee
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
To bandy hasty words. Thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of child-hood,
Effects of courtesie, dues of gratitude:
Thy half o'th' kingdom thou hast not forgot,
Wherein I thee endow'd.

Reg. Good sir, to th' purpose. [*Trumpet within.*]

Lear. Who put my man i'th' stocks?

Enter Steward.

Corn. What trumpet's that?

Reg. I know't, my sister's: this approves her letter,

That she would soon be here. Is your lady come?

Lear. Out, varlet, from my sight!

Corn. What means your grace?

Enter Gonerill.

Lear. Who stockt my servant? Regan, I've good hope,

Thou didst not know on't—Who comes here?
O heav'ns,

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Hallow obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down and take my part.
Art not asham'd to look upon this beard?
O Regan, will you take her by the hand?

Gon. Why not by th' hand, sir? how have I offended?

All's not offence, that indiscretion finds,
And dotage terms so.

Lear. O fides, you are too tough!
Will you yet hold?—how came my man i'th' stocks?

Corn. I set him there, sir; but his own disorders
Deserv'd much less advancement.

Lear. You? did you?

Reg. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If, 'till the expiration of your month,

You will return and sojourn with my sister,
 Dismissing half your train, come then to me!
 I'm now from home, and out of that provision
 Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

Lear. Return to her? and fifty men dismiss'd?
 No, rather I abjure all roofs, and chuse
 To be a comrade with the wolf and owl;
 Than have my smallest wants supplied by her.

Gon. At your choice, sir.

Lear. I pr'ythee, daughter, do not make me mad,
 I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewel;
 We'll no more meet, no more see one another,
 Let shame come when it will, I do not call it;
 I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
 Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.
 Mend, when thou canst; be better, at thy leisure.
 I can be patient, I can stay with Regan;
 I, and my hundred knights.

Reg. Not altogether so:
 I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
 For your fit welcome.

Lear. Is this well spoken?

Reg. I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?
 Is it not well? what should you need of more?
 Yea, or so many? since both charge and danger
 Speak 'gainst so great a number: how in one house
 Should many people under two commands
 Hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

Gon. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
 From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

Reg. Why not, my lord? if then they chanc'd
 to slack ye,
 We could controul them. If you'll come to me,
 (For now I spy a danger) I entreat you
 To bring but five-and-twenty; to no more
 Will I give place or notice.

Lear. I gave you all —

Reg. And in good time you gave it.

Lear.

Lear. Oh, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heav'n!

Keep me in temper! I would not be mad!

Gon. Hear me, my lord;

What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house, where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

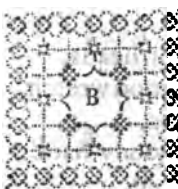
Reg. What needs one?

Lear. O, reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous;
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beasts. But for true need,
You heav'ns, give me that patience which I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as years; wretched in both;
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger;
O let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnat'ral hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall — I will do such things,
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth: you think, I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep. I have full cause of weeping:
This heart shall break into a thousand flaws,
Or ere I weep. O gods, I shall go mad! [*Exeunt.*]

END of the SECOND ACT.



A C T III.

S C E N E, *A Heath. Storm.**Enter Lear and Kent.**Lear.*


LOW winds, and crack your cheeks;
rage, blow!
You cataracts, and hurricanoes,
spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples,
drown'd the cocks!

You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunder-boles,
Sing my white head. And thou all shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th' world;
Crack nature's mould, all germins spill at once
That make ingrateful man.

Kent. Not all my best intreaties can persuade him
Into some needful shelter, or to 'bide
This poor slight cov'ring on his aged head,
Expos'd to this wild war of earth and heav'n.

[Thunder.]

Lear. Rumble thy belly full, spit fire, spout rain;
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters;
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children;
You owe me no subscription. Then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; — here I stand your slave;
A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man!
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters joyn'd

You

Your high-engender'd battles, 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. Oh! oh! 'tis foul.

Kent. Hard by, sir, is a hovel that will lend
Some shelter from this tempest.

Lear. No, I will be the pattern of all patience:
I will say nothing.

Kent. Alas, Sir! things that love-night,
Love not such nights as these: the wrathful Skies
Gallow the very wand'ers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves: since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard.

Lear. Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipt of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand:
Thou perjure, and thou simulator of virtue,
That art incestuous: caitiff, shake to pieces,
That under covert and convenient seeming,
Hast practis'd on man's life:—Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and ask
These dreadful summoners grace.—I am a man,
More sinn'd against, than sinning.

Kent. Good sir, to the hovel!

Lear. My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? art cold?
I'm cold myself. Where is the straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious. Come, your
hovel;
Poor knave, I've one part in my heart,
That's sorry yet for thee. [Exit.]

SCENE, *An Apartment in Gloucester's Castle.*

Enter Gloucester, and Edmund.

Glo. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this un-
natural dealing; when I desired their leave that I

might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charg'd me on pain of perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, or any way sustain him.

Edm. Most savage and unnatural!

Gla. Go to; say you nothing. There is division between the Dukes, and a worse matter than that: I have receiv'd a letter this night, 'tis dangerous to be spoken; (I have lock'd the letter in my closet :) these injuries, the king now bears, will be revenged home; there is part of a power already footed; we must incline to the king: I will look for him, and privily relieve him; go you, and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him perceiv'd. If he ask for me, I am ill, and gone to bed; if I die for it, as no less is threaten'd me, the king my old master must be relieved. There are strange things toward Edmund; pray you be careful. [*Exit.*]

Edm. This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke instantly know, and of that letter too.

This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me That which my father loses; no less than all. The younger rises when the old doth fall. [*Exit.*]

SCENE changes to a Part of the Heath with a Hovel.

Enter Lear and Kent.

Kent. Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter;

The tyranny o' th' open night's too rough
For nature to endure.

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I'd rather break mine own; good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much, that this contentious storm

Invaides us to the skin; so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,

The lesser is scarce felt. The tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there. Philanthropic
Is it not, as this mouth should rent this band
For lifting food to't? — But I'll punish home.
No, I will weep no more — In such a night,
To shut me out? — pour on, I will endure:
In such a night as this? O Regan, Gonerill,
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all —
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that —

Kent. Good my lord; enter here.

Lear. Pr'ythee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease;
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more — but I'll go in;
In, boy, go first. Your houseless poverty —
Nay, get thee in; I'll pray, and then I'll sleep —
Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these? — O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic: pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And shew the heav'ns more just.

Edg. within. Fathom and half, fathom and half!
poor Tom.

Kent. What art thou, that dost grumble there
i'th' straw? come forth.

Enter Edgar disguis'd like a Madman.

Edg. Away! the foul fiend follows me. Through
the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. Humph,
go to thy bed and warm thee.

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? and
art thou come to this?

Edg. Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom
the foul fiend hath led through fire and through
D 3 flame,

flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge, made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting horse, over four-inch'd bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor,—bless thy five wits; Tom's a cold. O do, de, do, de, do, de — [Snoozing.] bless thee from whirl-winds, star-blasting, and taking; do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now, and there, and here again, and there. [Storm still.]

Lear. What have his daughters brought him to this pass?

Couldst thou save nothing? didst thou give 'em all? Now all the plagues, that in the pendulous air Hang fated o'er mens faults, light on thy daughters!

Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear. Death! traitor, nothing could have subdued nature

To such a lowliness, but his unkind daughters.

Edg. Pillicock sat on pillicock-hill, alow, alow, loo, loo!

Lear. Is it the fashion that discarded fathers Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?

Judicious punishment! 'twas this flesh begot Those pelican daughters.

Edg. Take heed o' th' foul fiend; obey thy parents; keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom's a cold.

Lear. What hast thou been?

Edg. A serving-man, proud in heart, that curl'd my hair, wore gloves in my cap, serv'd the lust of my mistress's heart, and did the act of darkness with her: swore as many oaths as I spoke words, and broke them in the sweet face of heav'n. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand, hog in both, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes,

shoes, nor the rustling of silk betray thy poor heart to women. Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lender's book, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind. *[Storm still.]*

Lear. Thou wert better in thy grave, than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Aha! here's two of us are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings: come, unbutton here.

[Tearing off his cloaths.]

Kent. Defend his wits, good heaven!

Lear. One point I had forgot; what is your name?

Edg. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the wall-newt and the water-newt; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow dung for fallads, swallows the old rat, and the ditch-dog; that drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; that's whipt from tything to tything; that has three suits to his back, six shirts to his body,

Horse to ride, and weapon to wear,

But rats and mice, and such small deer,

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Frazerreto calls me, and tells me, Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

Lear. Right, ha! ha! was it not pleasant to have a thousand with red-hot spits come hissing upon them?

Edg. My tears begin to take his part, so much, They mar my counterfeiting. *[Aside.]*

Lear. The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-Hearts, see they bark at me.

Edg. Tom will throw his head at 'em : avaunt, ye curs.

Be thy mouth, or black, or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite :
Mastiff, grey-hound, mungrel grim,
Hound, or spaniel, brache, or hym :
Bob-tail tike, or trundle-tail,
Tom will make 'em weep and wail :
For with throwing thus my head,
Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.
Come, march to wakes and fairs, and market-
towns,

—Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

Lear. You, sir, I entertain you for one of my hundred, only I do not like the fashion of your garments ; you'll say they are Persian ; but no matter, let 'em be changed.

Edg. This is the foul sibbertigibbet ; he begins at Curfew, and walks till the first cock ; he gives the web, and the pin ; knits the elflock ; squints eye ; and makes the hair-lip ; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creatures of the earth.

Swiſthin footed thrice the world.

He met the night-mare and her nine-fold,

'Twas there he did appoint her ;

He bid her alight, and her troth plight,

And aroynt the witch, aroynt her,

Enter Gloucester.

Lear. What's he ?

Glo. What, has your grace no better company ?

Edg. The prince of darkness is a gentleman ;
Mooſo he is call'd, and Mahu.

Glo. Go with me, ſir ; hard by I have a tenant.
My duty cannot ſuffer me to obey in all your
Daughters hard commands, who have enjoin'd me
to make faſt my doors, and let this tyrannous night
take hold upon you. Yet have I ventur'd to come
ſeek you out, and bring you where both fire and
food are ready.

Kent.

Kent. Good my lord, take this offer.

Lear. First let me talk with this philosopher;
What is the cause of thunder?

Glo. Beseech you sir, to go into the house.

Lear. I'll talk a word with this same learned
Theban. What is your Study?

Edg. How to prevent the fiend, and to kill ver-
min.

Lear. Let me ask you a word in private.

Kent. His wits are quite unsettled; good sir,
let's force him hence.

Glo. Can't blame him? his daughters seek his
death; this bedlam but disturbs him the more.
Fellow, be gone.

Edg. Child Rowland to the dark tower came,
His word was still fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.— [Exit.

Glo. Now, prithee, friend, let us take him in
our arms, and carry him where he shall find both
welcome and protection. Good sir, along with us!

Lear. You say right. Let them anatomize Re-
gan! See what breeds about her heart! Is there
any cause in nature for these hard hearts?

Kent. I do beseech your grace.

Lear. Hift! — make no noise! make no noise!
— so, so! we'll to supper in the morning. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to Gloucester's Palace.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gonerill, Edmund, and
Attendants.

Corn. I'll have revenge ere I depart this house.
Regan, see here! a plot upon our state;
'Tis Glo'ster's character; he has betray'd
His double trust, of subject and of host.

Reg. Then double be our vengeance!

Edm. Oh that this treason had not been, or I
Not the discoverer!

Corn. Edmund, thou shalt find
A deater father in our love. Henceforth
We call thee earl of Glo'ster.

Edm.

Edm. I am much bounden to your grace, and will persevere in my loyalty, tho' the conflict be fore between that and my blood.

Corn. Our dear sister Gonerill, do you post speedily to my lord your husband; shew him this letter: the army of France is landed; seek out the traitor Glo'ster.

Reg. Hang him instantly.

Gon. Pluck out his eyes.

Corn. Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company; the revenges we are bound to take upon your father, are not fit for your beholding. Advise the Duke, where you are going, to a most hasty preparation; we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift, and intelligent betwixt us. Farewel, dear sister; farewel my lord of Glo'ster.

Enter Steward.

How now? where's the King?

Stew. My lord of Glo'ster has convey'd him hence. Some five or six-and-thirty of his knights Are gone with him tow'rd Dover! where they boast To have well-armed friends.

Corn. Get horses for your mistress.

Gon. Farewel, sweet lord and sister.

[Exit Gon. and Edm.]

Corn. Edmund, Farewel. — Go seek the traitor Glo'ster;

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us:

Though well we may not pass upon his life

Without the form of justice; yet our pow'r

Shall do a court'sie to our wrath, which men

May blame, but not controut.

Enter Gloucester, brought in by Servants.

Who's there? the traitor?

Reg. 'Tis he: thank heaven, he's ta'en.

Corn. Bind fast his arms.

Glo. What mean your graces?

You

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

Corn. Bind him, I say. *[They bind him.]*

Reg. Hard, hard: O traitor! thou shalt find —

Corn. Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

And what confed'racy have you with the traitors,
Late footed in the kingdom?

Reg. To whose hands

Have you sent the lunatick king? speak.

Corn. Where hast thou sent the king?

Glo. To Dover.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover?

Wast thou not charg'd, at peril —

Corn. Wherefore to Dover? let him first answer that.

Glo. I am ty'd to th' stake and I must stand the course.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover?

Glo. Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
Carve his anointed flesh; but I shall see
The winged vengeance overtake such children.

Duke. See't thou shalt never; slaves, perform
your work;
Out with those treacherous eyes; dispatch, I say;
[Ex. Glo. and Servants.]

If thou seest vengeance —

Glo. *[without]* He that will think to live 'till he
be old

Give me some help. — O cruel! oh! ye gods.

Serv. Hold, hold, my lord, I bar your cruelty;
I cannot love your safety, and give way
To such barbarous practice.

Duke. Ah, my villain!

Serv. I have been your servant from my infancy,
But better servit have I never done you
Than with this boldness —

Duke. Take thy death, slave.

Serv. Nay then, revenge! *[Fight.]*

Reg. Help here! are you not hurt, my lord?

Re-enter Gloucester and Servants.

Glo. All dark and comfortless — where's my son Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature
To quit this horrid act.

Reg. Out, treacherous villain.
Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he,
That broach'd thy treasons to us.

Glo. O my follies !
Then Edgar was abus'd. Kind gods, forgive
Me that, and prosper him !

Reg. Go thrust him out
At gates, and let him smell his way to Dover.

[*Exeunt with Glo.*

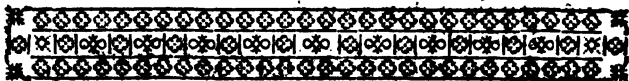
How is't, my lord? how look you?

Corn. I have receiv'd a hurt: follow me, lady. —
Turn out that eyeless villain; throw this slave
Upon the dunghill. — Regan, I bleed apace.
Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

[*Exit, led by Regan.*

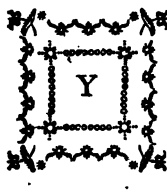
END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT



A C T IV.

SCENE *an open Country.**Enter Edgar.*


 YET better thus, and known to be
 contemn'd,
 Than still contemn'd and flatter'd.
 To be worst,
 The lowest, most dejected thing of
 fortune,

Stands still in esperance; lives not in fear.
 The lamentable change is from the best;
 The worst returns to comfort.

Enter Gloucester, led by an old Man.

Who comes here?
 My father poorly led? World, world, O world!
 But that thy strange mutations make us wait thee,
 Life would not yield to age.

Old Man. O my good lord, I have been your
 tenant,
 And your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

Glo. Away, get thee away: good friend, be gone;
 Thy comforts can do me no good at all,
 Thee they may hurt.

Old Man. You cannot see your way.

Glo. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes:
 I stumbled when I saw. O dear son Edgar,
 Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
 I'd say, I had eyes again!

Old Man. How now? who's there?

Edg. O gods! who is't can say, I'm at the worst?
 I'm worse, than e'er I was.

Old

Old Man. 'Tis poor mad Tom.

Glo. Is it a beggar-man?

Old Man. Madman, and beggar too.

Glo. He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw;
Which made me think a man, a worm. My son
Came then into my mind; and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him. I've heard more
since.

As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods;
They kill us for their sport.

Edg. Alas, he's sensible that I was wrong'd,
And should I own myself, his tender heart
Would break betwixt extremes of grief and joy.
Bad is the trade must play the fool to sorrow,
Ang'ring itself and others.—Bless thee, master.

Glo. Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man. Ay, my lord.

Glo. Get thee away: if, for my sake,
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain
I th' way tow'rd Dover, do it for ancient love;
And bring some covering for this naked wretch,
Whom I'll intreat to lead me.

Old Man. Alack, sir, he is mad.

Glo. 'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead
the blind:

Do as I bid, or rather do thy pleasure;
Above the rest, begone.

Old Man. I'll bring him the best 'parrel that I have,
Come on't what will. [Exit.]

Glo. Sirrah, naked fellow!

Edg. Poor Tom's a cold.—I cannot fool it further.

Glo. Come hither, fellow,

Edg. And yet I must;

Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

Glo. Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edg. Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-
path: poor Tom hath been scar'd out of his good
wits. Bless thee, good man, from the foul fiend.

Glo.

Glo. Here, take this purse, thou whom the
 heav'n's plagues
 Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched,
 Makes thee the happier: heav'n's deal so still!
 Dost thou know Dover?

Edg. Ay, master.

Glo. There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
 Looks fearfully on the confined deep:
 Bring me but to the very brink of it,
 And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear,
 With something rich about me: from that place
 I shall no leading need.

Edg. Give me thy arm,
 Poor Tom shall lead thee.

[*Exeunt*;

SCENE, the Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Gonerill and Edmund.

Gon. Welcome, my lord. I marvel, our mild
 husband
 Not met us on the way.

Enter Steward.

Now, where's your master?

Stew. Madam, within; but never man so chang'd:
 I told him of the army that was landed;
 He smil'd at it. I told him you were coming;
 His answer was, The worse. Of Glo'ster's treachery,
 And of the loyal service of his son,
 When I inform'd him, then he call'd me Sot.
 What most he should dislike, seems pleasant to him;
 What like, offensive.

Gon. Then shall you go no further. [To *Edm.*
 It is the coward's terror of his spirit,
 That dares not undertake.
 Back, Edmund, to my brother;
 Hasten his musters, and conduct his powers.
 I must change arms at home, and give the distaff
 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
 Shall pass between us: you ere long shall hear,
 If you dare venture on your own behalf,

48 K I N G L E A R.

A mistress's command.

Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edm. Yours in the ranks of death.

Gon. My most dear Glo'ster! [*Exit Edmund.*]

Oh, the strange difference of man and man!

To thee a woman's services are due,

My fool usurps my duty.

Stew. Madam, here comes my lord. [*Exit.*]

Enter Albany.

Alb. Oh Gonerill, what have you done?

Tygers, not daughters, what have you performed?

A father and a gracious aged man,

Most barb'rous, most degenerate, have you madded.

How cou'd my brother suffer you to do it,

A man, a prince by him so benefited?

Gon. Milk liver'd man!

That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;

Where's thy drum?

France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,

Whilst thou, a moral fool, sit'st still, and cry'st,

"Alack! why does he so?"——

Alb. Thou chang'd, and self-converted thing!

for shame,

Be-monster not thy feature.

Enter Messenger.

Mes. Oh, my good lord, the Duke of Corn-

wall's dead;

Slain by his servant, going to put out

The earl of Glo'ster's eyes.

Alb. Glo'ster's eyes!

Mes. A servant, that he bred, thrill'd with re-

morse,

Oppos'd the horrid act; bending his sword

Against his master: who, thereat intrag'd,

Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead:

But not without that harmful stroke, which since

Hath pluck'd him after.

Alb. This shews you are above,

You

You justices, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge. But O poor Glo'ster!
Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

Mef. Come with my lady hither.

Alb. He's not here.

Mef. No, my good lord, he is return'd again.

Alb. Knows he the wickedness?

Mef. Ay, my good lord, 'twas he inform'd
against him,

And quit the house of purpose, that their punish-
ment

Might have the freer course.

Alb. Glo'ster, I live

To thank thee for the love thou shew'dst the King,
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend,
Tell me what more thou know'st. [*Going, returns.*
See thyself, Gonerill!

Proper deformity shews not in the fiend,
So horrid as in woman.

Gon. O vain fool!

[*Exit Alb. and Mef.*]

That hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honour from thy suffering!

Enter Steward, with a letter.

Stew. This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer:
'Tis from your sister. Cornwall being dead,
His loss your sister has in part supply'd,
Making earl Edmund general of her forces.

Gon. One way I like this well:

But being widow, and my Glo'ster with her,
May pluck down all the building of my love.
I'll read, and answer these dispatches strait.
It was great ignorance, Glo'ster's eyes being out,
To let him live. Add speed unto your journey,
And if you chance to meet that old blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off. [*Exeunt.*]

K I N G L E A R.

S C E N E, *Dover.**Enter Kent, and a Gentleman.*

Kent. Did your letters pierce the Queen to any demonstration of grief?

Gent. Yes, sir; she took 'em, read 'em in my presence;

And now and then a big round tear ran down
Her delicate cheek: much mov'd, but not to rage,
Patience with sorrow strove. Her smiles and tears
Were like a wetter May;

Kent. Spoke you with her since?

Gent. No.

Kent. Well, sir; the poor distressed Lear's in town;
Who sometimes, in his better tune remembers
What we are come about; and by no means
Will yield to see Cordelia.

Gent. Why, good sir?

Kent. A sov'reign shame so bows him; his un-
kindness,

That stript her from his benediction, turn'd her
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters; these things sting him
So venomously, that burning shame detains him
From his dear daughter.

Gent. Alack, poor gentleman!

Kent. Of Albany's, and Cornwall's Pow'rs you
heard.

Gent. 'Tis so, they are a-foot.

Kent. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile:
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve
Lending me this acquaintance. Pray, along with
me.

[*Exeunt.*]S C E N E, *a Camp.**Enter Cordelia, Physician, and Soldiers.*

Cox. Alack, 'tis he; why he was met ev'n now
As mad as the vext sea, singing aloud,
Crowned with flowers, and all the weeds that grow

In our sustaining corn. — Their poor old father !
 Oh sisters, sisters ! shame of ladies ! sisters !
 Ha, Regan, Gonerill ! what ! i'th' storm ! i'th' night ?
 Let pity ne'er believe it ! Oh my heart !

Phys. Take comfort, madam ; there are means
 to cure him.

Cor. No ; 'tis too probable the furious storm
 Has pierc'd his tender body past all cure ;
 And the bleak winds, cold rain, and sulph'rous
 light'ning,

Unsettled his care-wearied mind for ever.
 Send forth a cent'ry, bring him to our eye ;
 Try all the art of man, all med'cine's power,
 For the restoring his bereaved sense !
 He that helps him, take all !

Phys. Be patient, madam :
 Our foster nurse of Nature is Repose,
 The which he lacks ; that to provoke in him
 Are many lentent simples, which have power
 To close the eye of anguish.

Cord. All blest secrets,
 All you unpublisch'd virtues of the earth,
 Spring with my tears ; be aidant and remediate
 In the good man's distress ! seek, seek for him ;
 Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve his life.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

If it be so, one only boon I beg ;
 That you'd convey me to his breathless trunk,
 With my own hands to close a father's eyes,
 With show'rs of tears to wash his clay-cold cheeks,
 Then o'er his limbs, with one heart-rending sigh,
 To breathe my spirit out, and die beside him.

Enter a Messenger.

Mes. News, madam :
 The British pow'rs are marching hitherward.

Cor. 'Tis known before. Our preparation stands
 In expectation of them. O dear father,
 It is thy business that I go about : therefore great
 France

My mourning and important tears hath pitied.
 No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
 But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, *the Country, near Dover.*

Enter Gloucester, and Edgar as a Peasant.

Glo. When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?

Edg. You do climb up it now. Mark how we labour.

Glo. Methinks, the ground is even.

Edg. Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

Glo. No, truly.

Edg. Why then your other senses grow imperfect
 By your eyes anguish.

Glo. So may it be, indeed.

Methinks, thy voice is alter'd; and thou speak'st
 In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

Edg. You're much deceiv'd: in nothing am I
 chang'd,

But in my garments.

Glo. Sure, you're better spoken.

Edg. Come on, sir, here's the place—stand still.
 How fearful

And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
 The crows and choughs, that wing the midway air,
 Shew scarce so gross as beetles. Half way down
 Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!
 Methinks, he seems no bigger than his head.
 The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
 Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
 Diminish'd to her cock; her cock! a buoy
 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
 Topple down headlong.

Glo. Set me, where you stand.

Edg.

Edg. Give me your hand : you're now within a foot

Of th' extream verge : for all below the moon
Would I not now leap forward.

Glo. Let go my hand :

Here, friend, 's another purse, in it a jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking. May the gods
Prosper it with thee ! go thou further off ;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going

Edg. Now fare ye well, good sir. [*Seems to go.*]
I trifle thus with his despair, to cure it.

Glo. O you mighty Gods !

This world do I renounce ; and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off :
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and latter part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O blefs him !

Enter Lear, drest madly with flowers.

Lear. No, they cannot touch me for coyning :
I am the King himself.

Glo. Ha ! who comes here ?

Edg. O thou side-piercing sight !

Lear. Nature's above art in that respect. There's
your press-money. That fellow handles his bow
like a crow-keeper : draw me a clothier's yard.
Look, look, a mouse ! peace, peace ;—there's my
gauntlet, I'll prove it on a giant. Bring up the
brown bills. O, well flown barb ! i'th' clout, i'th'
clout : hewgh !—give the word.

Edg. Sweet marjoram.

Lear Pafs !

Glo. I know that voice.

Lear. Ha ! Gonerill ! hah ! Regan ! they flatter'd me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs
in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say
ay, and no, to every thing that I said.—Ay, and no
too, was no good divinity. When the rain came

to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter ; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding : there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words ; they told me, I was every thing : 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.

Glo. The trick of that voice I do well remember :

Is't not the King ?

Lear. Ay, every inch a king.

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

I pardon that man's life. What was the cause ?

Adultery ? thou shalt not die ; die for adultery ? no. To't, luxury, pell mell ; for I lack soldiers.

Glo. Not all my sorrows past so deep have touch'd me

As these sad accents. Sight were now a torment.

Lear. Behold yon simpering dame, whose face presages snow ; that minces virtue, and does shake the head to hear of pleasure's name. The fitchew, nor the pampered steed goes to it with a more riotous appetite ; down from the waist they are centaurs, tho' women all above : but to the girdle do the gods inherit, beneath is all the fiends. There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit ; fie, fie, fie ; pah, pah ; an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination ! there's money for thee.

Glo. O, let me kiss that hand.

Lear. Let me wipe 't first, it smells of mortality.

Glo. O ruin'd piece of nature !

Lear. Arraign her first ! 'tis Gonerill. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she struck the poor king her father.

Glo. Patience, good sir !

Lear. And here's another, whose warpt looks proclaim

What store her heart is made of.—Stop her there !
Arms, arms, sword, fire !—Corruption in the place !

False

False justicer, why hast thou let her scape?

Glo. O pity, sir! where is the firmness now
That you so oft have boasted.—Do you know me?

Lear. I do remember thine eyes well enough!
do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not love. Read
thou this challenge, mark but the penning of it.

Glo. Were all the letters suns, I could not see
one.

Edg. I would not take this from report; it is,
and my heart breaks at it.

Lear. Read.

Glo. What, with this case of eyes?

Lear. Oh, oh, are you there with me? no eyes
in your head, nor no money in your purse? yet
you see how this world goes.

Glo. I see it feelingly.

Lear. What, art mad? a man may see how this
world goes, with no eyes. Look with thine ears:
see, how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief.
Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy,
which is the justice, which is the thief? thou hast
seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Glo. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the beggar run from the cur? there
thou might'st behold the great image of authority;
a dog's obey'd in office.—

Thou rascal-beadle, hold thy bloody hand:

Why dost thou lash that whore? strip thy own
back;

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind,

For which thou whip'st her. Th' usurer hangs the
cozener.

Through tatter'd weeds small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate Sins with gold,
And the strong lance of Justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.

Get thee glass eyes,

And, like a scurvy politician, seem

To see the things thou do'st not.

Now, now, now, now. Pull off my boots : harder,
harder, so.

Edg. O matter and impertinency mixt,
Reason in madness !

Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my
eyes.

I know thee well enough, thy name is Glo'ster;
Thou must be patient ; we came crying hither :
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
We wawle and cry. I will preach to thee : mark—

Glo. Alack, alack the day !

Lear. When we are born, we cry, that we are
come

To this great stage of fools. —

Enter a Gentleman with Attendants.

Gent. O, here he is, lay hand upon him ; fir,
Your most dear daughter—

Lear. No rescue ? what, a prisoner ? I am even
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well,
You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons,
I am cut to th' brain.

Gent. You shall have any thing.

Lear. No seconds ? all myself ? I will die bravely,
Like a smug bridegroom. What ? I will be jovial :
Come, come, I am a king. My masters, know
you that ?

Gent. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

Lear. Then there's life in't.

It were an excellent stratagem to shoe a troop of
horse with felt : I'll put it in proof — no noise ! no
noise ! now will we steal upon these sons-in-law ;
and then — kill, kill, kill, kill. [*Exit with Gent.*

Glo. The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrows. Better I were distract,
And woe, by wrong imaginations, lose
The knowledge of myself. — Ye gentle gods,
Take my breath from me ! let not misery
Tempt me again to die before you please.

Edg.

Edg. Well pray you, father.

Glo. Now, good sir, what are you?

Edg. A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows,

Who by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,
I'll lead you to some biding.

Glo. Heartly thanks!

Enter Steward.

Stew. A proclaim'd prize! most happy!
That eyeless head of thine was first fram'd flesh,
To raise my fortunes. Old, unhappy traitor,
The sword is out, that must destroy thee.

Glo. Let thy friendly hand put strength enough to't.

Stew. Wherefore, bold peasant,

Dar'st thou support a publish'd traitor! hence,
Lest I destroy thee too. Let go his arm.

Edg. Chill not let go, sir, without further 'casion.

Stew. Let go, slave, or thou dy'st.

Edg. Good gentleman, go your gate; and let
poor volk pass: and 'chud ha' been zwagger'd out
of my life, 'twould not ha' been so long as 'tis by
a vort-night. Nay, come not near th' old man: keep
out, or i'se try whether your costard or my bat be
the harder. [*Fight.*]

Stew. Out, dunghill! [*Edgar knocks him down.*]
Slave, thou hast slain me: oh, untimely death——

[*Dies.*]

Edg. I know thee well, a serviceable villain;
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress,
As badness would desire.

Glo. What, is he dead?

Edg. Sit you down, sir.

This is a letter-carrier, and may have
Some papers of intelligence—what's here?

“To Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. [*Reading.*]

“Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You
“have many opportunities to cut him off: if he
“return the conqueror, then am I the prisoner,
“and

“ and his bed my goal; from the loathed warmth
“ whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your
“ labour.

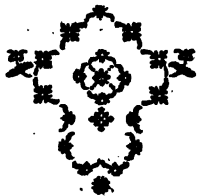
“ Your (wife, so I would say)

“ affectionate Servant,

G O N E R I L L.

Oh, undistinguish'd space of woman's will!
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
And the exchange my brother. Here, i'th' sands
Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified
Of murth'rous letchers: and in the mature time,
With this ungracious paper strike the sight
Of the death-practis'd Duke.
Give me your hand:
Come, sir, I will bestow you with a friend. [*Exeunt.*]

END of the FOURTH ACT.



A C T



A C T V.

S C E N E, *a Chamber.*

Lear asleep on a Couch, Cordelia, and Attendants:

Cordelia.



Ye kind gods!

Cure this great breach in his abused nature!

Th'untun'd and jarring senses, Oh, wind up

Of this child-changed father!

Phys. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;

I doubt not of his temperance.

Cor. O my dear father! restauration, hang Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss Repair those violent harms, that my two sisters Have in thy reverence made!

Phys. Kind and dearest princess!

Cor. O Regan! Gonerill, inhuman sisters! Had he not been your father, these white flakes Did challenge pity of you. Was this a face To be expos'd against the warring winds? To stand against the deep, dread-bolted thunder? In the most terrible and nimble stroke Of quick, cross lightning?—My very enemy's dog, Tho' he had bit me, should have stood that night Against my fire: and wast thou fain, poor father, To hovel thee

In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!

'Tis wonder, that thy life and wits, at once, Had not concluded all.—He wakes; speak to him.

Phys. Madam, do you; 'tis fittest?

Cor.

Cor. How does my royal lord? how fares your Majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong, to take me out o'th' grave.

Ha! is this too a world of cruelty!

I know my privilege; think not that I will

Be treated like a wretched mortal! No.

No more of that!

Cor. Speak to me, sir, who am I?

Lear. Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.

Cor. Sir, do you know me?

Lear. You are a spirit, I know; when did you die?

Cor. Still, still, far wide —

Phys. He's scarce awake; he'll soon grow more compos'd.

Lear. Where have I been? where am I? fair day-light?

I'm mightily abus'd; I should even die with pity,

To see another thus. I know not what to say;

I will not swear these are my hands:

Would I were assur'd of my condition!

Cor. O look upon me, sir,

And hold your hand in benediction o'er me.

Nay, Sir, you must not kneel.

Lear. Pray, do not mock me;

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward; and to deal plainly,

I fear, I am not in my perfect mind.

Cor. Ah then farewell to patience! witness for me,
Ye mighty pow'rs, I ne'er complain'd till now!

Lear. Methinks, I should know you, and know this man.

Yet I am doubtful: for I'm mainly ignorant,

What place this is; and all the skill I have,

Remembers not these garments; nay, I know not

Where I did sleep last night. Do not laugh at me,

For,

For, as I am a man, I think, this lady
To be my child Cordelia.

Cor. O my dear, dear father!

Lear. Be your tears wet? yes faith; pray do not weep.

I know I have giv'n thee cause, and am so humbled
With crosses since, that I cou'd ask
Forgiveness of thee, were it possible
That thou cou'dst grant it;
If thou hast poison for me I will drink it,
Bless thee, and die.

Cor. O pity, sir, a bleeding heart, and cease
This killing language.

Lear. Tell me, Friends, where am I?

Phys. In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear. Do not abuse me.

Phys. Be comforted, good madam, for the violence
Of his distemper's past; we'll lead him in,
Nor trouble him, 'till he is better settled.
Wil't please you, sir, walk into freer air?

Lear. You must bear with me; pray you now,
forget and forgive! I am old and foolish.

[They lead him off.]

Cor. The gods restore you!—hark I hear afar
The beaten Drum. Oh! for an arm
Like the fierce Thunderer's, when the Earth-born
sons

Storm'd heav'n, to fight this injur'd father's battle!
That I cou'd shift my sex, and dye me deep
In his opposer's blood! but, as I may,
With women's weapons, piety and pray'rs,
I'll aid his cause.—You never-erring gods
Fight on his side, and thunder on his foes
Such tempests as his poor ag'd head sustain'd:
Your Image suffers when a monarch bleeds:
'Tis your own cause; for that your succours bring;
Revenge yourselves, and right an injur'd king!

[Exit.]

Bastard in his Tent.

Bast. To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder;—neither can be held,
If both remain alive.—Where shall I fix?
Cornwall is dead; and Regan's empty bed
Seems cast by fortune for me—But bright Gonerill,
Brings yet untasted beauty; I will use
Her husband's count'nance for the battle, then
Usurp at once his bed and throne. [*Enter Officers.*
My trusty scouts, you're well return'd; have ye
descry'd

The strength and posture of the enemy?

Off. We have, and were surpris'd to find
The banish'd Kent return'd, and at their head;
Your brother Edgar on the rear; old Glo'ster
(A moving spectacle) led through the ranks,
Whose pow'rful tongue, and more prevailing
wrongs,

Have so enrag'd their rustic spirit, that with
Th' approaching dawn we must expect a battle.

Bast. You bring a welcome hearing. Each to his
charge;

Line well your ranks, and stand on your award.
To-night repose you; and i'th' morn we'll give
The sun a fight that shall be worth his rising.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, *a Valley near the Camp.*

Enter Edgar and Gloucester.

Edg. Here, sir, take you the shadow of this tree
For your good host; pray that the right may thrive:
If ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort. [*Exit.*

Glo. Thanks, friendly sir;
The fortune your good cause deserves betide you.

An Alarm; after which Gloucester speaks.

The fight grows hot; the whole war's now at work,
Where's

Where's Glo'ster now, that us'd to head the fray?
 No more of shelter, thou blind worm, but forth
 To th' open field? the war may come this way,
 And crush thee into rest. — Here lay thee down,
 And tear the earth. When, Edgar, wilt thou come
 To pardon, and dismiss me to the grave?

[*A Retreat sounded.*]

Hark! a retreat; the king I fear has lost.

Re-enter Edgar.

Edg. Away, old man, give me your hand, away!
 King Lear has lost; he and his daughter ta'en:
 Give me your hand. Come on!

Glo. No farther, sir; a man may rot, even here.

Edg. What! in ill thoughts again? men must
 endure

Their going hence, ev'n as their coming hither.

Glo. Heaven's will be done then! henceforth I'll
 endure

Affliction, till it do cry out itself,

Enough, enough, and die.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Flourish. Enter in Conquest, Albany, Gonerill, Regan,
 Bastard. — Lear, Kent, Cordelia, Prisoners.*

Alb. It is enough to have conquer'd; cruelty
 Shou'd ne'er survive the fight. Captain o'th' Guard,
 Treat well your royal prisoners, 'till you have
 Our farther orders, as you hold our pleasure.

Bast. Sir, I approve it safest to pronounce
 Sentence of death upon this wretched king,
 Whose age has charms in it, his title more,
 To draw the commons once more to his side;
 'Twere best prevent —

Alb. Sir, by your favour,
 I hold you but a subject of this war,
 Not as a brother.

Reg. That's as we list to grace him.
 Have you forgot that he did lead our pow'rs?
 Bore the commission of our place and person?
 And that authority may well stand up,
 And call itself your brother.

Gon.

Gon. Not so hot!
In his own merit he exalts himself,
More than in your addition.

Enter Edgar disguis'd.

Alb. What art thou?

Edg. Pardon me, sir, that I presume to stop
A prince and conqu'ror; yet, ere you triumph,
Give ear to what a stranger can deliver
Of what concerns you more than triumph can.
I do impeach your general there of treason,
Lord Edmund, that usurps the name of Glo'ster,
Of foulest practice 'gainst your life and honour;
This charge is true: and wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
In single combat what I do avouch,
If Edmund dares but trust his cause and sword.

Edm. What will not Edmund dare? my lord, I beg
You'd instantly appoint
The place where I may meet this challenger,
Whom I will sacrifice to my wrong'd fame:
Remember, sir, that injur'd honour's nice,
And cannot brook delay!

Alb. Anon, before our tent, i'th' army's view,
There let the herald cry!

Edg. I thank your highness in my champion's
name:
He'll wait your trumpet's call.

Alb. Lead, *[Exit Alb. and train.*

Edm. Come hither, captain, hark! take thou
this note; *[Giving a paper.*

One step I have advanc'd thee! if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes: know thou this, that men
Are as the time is; to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword; my great employment
Will not bear question; either say, thou'lt do't,
Or thrive by other means.

Capt. I'll do't, my lord.

Edm. About it, and write happy when thou'lt
done. *[Exit.*

Manent Lear, Kent, Cordelia, guarded.

Lear. O Kent! Cordelia!

You are the only pair that e'er I wrong'd,
And the just gods have made you witnessses
Of my disgrace; the very shame of fortune,
To see me chain'd and shackled at these years!
Yet were you but spectators of my woes,
Not fellow-sufferers, all were well.

Cor. This language, sir, adds yet to our affliction.

Lear. Thou Kent, didst head the troops that
fought my battle.

Expos'd thy life and fortunes for a master
That had (as I remember) banish'd thee.

Kent. Pardon me, sir, that once I brok't your
orders.

Banish'd by you, I kept me here disguis'd
To watch your fortunes, and protect your person:
You know you entertain'd a rough blunt fellow,
One Caius, and you thought he did you service.

Lear. My trusty Caius, I have lost him too!
'Twas a rough honesty. *[Weeps.]*

Kent. I was that Caius,
Disguis'd in that coarse dress, to follow you.

Lear. My Caius, too! wert thou my trusty
Caius?

Enough, enough.—

Cor. Ah me, he faints! his blood forsakes his
cheek.

Help, Kent!

Lear. No, no, they shall not see us weep.
We'll see them rot first.—Guards, lead away to
prison.

Come, Kent; Cordelia, come;
We two will sit alone, like birds i'th' cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness; thus we'll live and
pray,

And take upon us the mystery of things,
As if we were heav'n's spies.

Cor. Upon such sacrifices
The gods themselves throw incense.

Lear. Have I caught you?
He that parts us, must bring a brand from heav'n:
Together we'll out-toil the spite of hell,
And die the wonders of the world; away!

[Exeunt guarded.]

Flourish. *Enter before the Tents, Albany, Edmund,
Guards and Attendants.*

Alb. Now Glo'ster, trust to thy single virtue:
for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge: now let our trumpets speak,
And herald read out this. *[Herald reads.]*

"If any man of quality within the lists of the
"army will maintain upon Edmund, suppos'd earl
"of Glo'ster, that he is a manifold traitor, let him
"appear by the third sound of the trumpet; he
"is bold in his defence.—Again, again."

[Trumpet answers from within.]

Enter Edgar arm'd.

Alb. Lord Edgar!

Edm. Ha! my brother!
The only combatant that I cou'd fear,
For in my breast guilt duels on his side:
But, conscience, what have I to do with thee?
Awe thou the dull legitimate slaves: but I
Was born a libertine, and so I keep me.

Edg. My noble prince, a word;—ere we engage,
Into your highness' hands I give this paper;
It will the truth of my impeachment prove,
Whatever be my fortune in the fight.

Alb. We shall peruse it.

Edg. Now, Edmund, draw thy sword,
That if my speech has wrong'd a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice: here i'th' presence

Of

Of this high Prince, and this renowned list,
 I brand thee with the spotted name of Traitor ;
 False to thy gods, thy father, and thy brother,
 And, what is more, thy friend ; false to this Prince :
 If then thou shar'st a spark of Glo'ster's virtue,
 Acquit thyself ; or if thou shar'st his courage,
 Meet this defiance bravely.

Edm. I have a daring soul, and so have at thy heart.

Sound, trumpet. [*Fight, Bastard falls.*
 What you have charg'd me with, that I have done :
 And more, much more ; the time will bring it out.
 'Tis past, and so am I :

Edg. The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
 Make instruments to scourge us :
 The dark and vicious place, where thee he got,
 Cost him his eyes.

Edm. Thou'st spoken right, 'tis true,
 The wheel is come full circle ; I am here.
 Yet, ere I die, some good I mean to do,
 Despight of mine own nature. Quickly send
 (Be brief,) into the castle ; for my order
 Is on the life of Lear and Cordelia.
 Nay, send in time.

Edg. Run, run, O run —

Alb. The gods defend them ! bear him hence a while.
 [*Edm. is borne off. Exeunt.*]

S C E N E, A Prison.

Lear asleep, with his Head on Cordelia's Lap.

Cord. What toils, thou wretched King, hast
 thou endur'd,
 To make thee draw, in chains, a sleep so sound ?
 O gods ! A sudden gloom o'erwhelms me, and the
 image

Of death o'erspreads the place.—Ha ! who are these ?
Captain and Officers with Cords.

Capt. Now, sirs, dispatch ; already you are paid.
 In part, the best of your reward's to come.

Lear. Charge, charge, upon the flank, the left wing halts.

Push, push the battle, and the day's our own.
 Their ranks are broken down, down with Albany!
 Who holds my hands?—O thou deceiving sleep;
 I was this very minute on the chase,
 And now a pris'ner here!—What mean the
 Slaves?

You will not murder me?

Card. Help, earth and heaven!
 For your souls sake, dear sirs, and for the gods!

Off. No tears, good lady;
 Come, sirs, make ready your cords.

Card. You, sir, I'll seize,
 You have a human form, and if no prayers
 Can touch your soul to spare a poor King's life,
 If there be any thing that you hold dear,
 By that I beg you to dispatch me first.

Capt. Comply with her request; dispatch her first.

Lear. Off hell-hounds, by the gods I charge
 you spare her;

'Tis my Cordelia, my true pious daughter;
 No pity?—Nay, then take an old man's vengeance.
*Snatches a Sword, and kills two of them, the rest quit
 Cordelia, and turn upon him.*

Enter Edgar, Albany, and Guards.

Edg. Death! hell! ye vultures, hold your im-
 pious hands,

Or take a speedier death than you wou'd give.

Alb. Guards, seize those instruments of cruelty.

Gent. Look here, my lord, see where the generous
 King

Has slain two of 'em.

Lear. Did I not, Fellow?

I've seen the day, with my good biting faulchion
 I cou'd have made 'em skip: I am old now,
 And these vile crosses spoil me; out of breath;
 Fie, oh! quite out of breath, and spent.

Alb.

Alb. Bring in old Kent; and, Edgar, guide you
hither

Your father, whom you said was near; [*Ex. Edgar.*
He may be an ear-witness at the least
Of our proceedings. [*Kent brought in.*

Lear. Who are you?

My eyes are none o'th' best, I'll tell you straight:
Oh Albany! Well, sir, we are your captives,
And you are come to see death pass upon us.
Why this delay?—Or is't your highness' pleasure
To give us first the torture? say ye so?
Why here's old Kent and I, as tough a pair
As e'er bore tyrant's stroke.—But, my Cordelia,
My poor Cordelia here, O pity her!

Alb. Thou injur'd Majesty,
The wheel of fortune now has made her circle,
And blessings yet stand 'twixt the grave and thee,

Lear. Com'st thou, inhuman lord, to sooth us
back

To a fool's paradise of hope, to make
Our doom more wretched? Go to, we are too well
Acquainted with misfortune, to be gull'd
With lying hope; no, we will hope no more.

Alb. Know, the noble Edgar
Impeach'd lord Edmund, since the fight, of treason,
And dar'd him for the proof to single combat,
In which the gods confirm'd his charge by con-
quest;

I left ev'n now the traitor wounded mortally.

Lear. And whither tends this story?

Alb. Ere they fought,
Lord Edgar gave into my hands this paper;
A blacker scroll of treason and of lust
Than can be found in the records of hell;
There, sacred sir, behold the character
Of Gonerill, the worst of daughters, but
More vicious wife.

Cor. Cou'd there be yet addition to their guilt!
What will not they that wrong a father do?

Alb. Since then my injuries, Lear, fall in with thine,

I have resolv'd the same redress for both.

Kent. What says my lord?

Cor. Speak, for methought I heard
The charming voice of a descending god.

Alb. The troops, by Edmund rais'd, I have disbanded;

Those that remain are under my command.

What comfort may be brought to cheer your age,
And heal your savage wrongs, shall be apply'd;

For to your majesty we do resign

Your kingdom, save what part yourself conferr'd
On us in marriage.

Kent. Hear you that, my liege?

Cor. Then there are gods, and virtue is their care.

Lear. Is't possible?

Let the spheres stop their course, the sun make halt,

The winds be hush'd, the seas and fountains rest;

All nature pause, and listen to the change.

Where is my Kent, my Caius?

Kent. Here, my liege.

Lear. Why I have news that will recall thy youth:

Ha! didst thou hear't, or did th' inspiring gods

Whisper to me alone? old Lear shall be

A king again.

Alb. Thy captive daughter too, the wife of France,

Unransom'd we enlarge, and shall, with speed,
Give her safe convoy to her royal husband.

Lear. Cordelia then is Queen again. Mark that!

Winds, catch the sound,

And bear it on your rosy wings to heav'n:

Cordelia's still a Queen.

Re-enter Edgar with Gloucester.

Alb. Look, sir, where pious Edgar comes,
Leading his eyeless Father.

Glo.

Glo. Where's my liege? conduct me to his knees,
to hail

His second birth of empire : my dear Edgar
Has with himself reveal'd the king's blest restoration.

Lear. My poor dark Glo'ster !

Glo. O let me kiss that once more scepter'd hand !

Lear. Speak, is not that the noble suff'ring Edgar ?

Glo. My pious son, more dear than my lost eyes.

Edg. Your leave, my liege, for an unwelcome
message.

Edmund (but that's a trifle) is expir'd.

What more will touch you, your imperious daughters,
Gonerill and haughty Regan, both are dead,

Each by the other poison'd at a banquet :

This, dying, they confess'd.

Cord. O fatal period of ill-govern'd life !

Lear. Ingrateful as they were, my heart feels yet
A pang of nature for their wretched fall.

Glo. Now, gentle gods, give Glo'ster his discharge.

Lear. No, Glo'ster, thou hast business yet for life;
Thou, Kent, and I, in sweet tranquillity
Will gently pass the evening of our days ;
Thus will we talk, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies : and our remains
Shall in an even course of thoughts be pass'd.
My child, Cordelia, all the gods can witness
How much thy truth to empire I prefer !
Thy bright example shall convince the world
(Whatever storms of fortune are decreed)
That Truth and Virtue shall at last succeed.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*]



70A



